

# **Confucius**

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### **Introduction**

Confucius was a very well-known Chinese philosopher. His teachings have influenced Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese culture. All of his ideas and philosophies have combined to form a special philosophy, Confucianism.

### **Early Life**

Little is known about Confucius' early life. However, it is known that he was born around 551 BC. He was born into a poor family living in the North China Plain. In his early years, he had a great desire for knowledge and wisdom. He mostly taught himself during using books and any other sources he could find. Originally, his goal was to advance to a government office. Instead, he decided to take up teaching.

### **Analects**

According to most historians, Confucius never actually wrote down his teachings. Instead, his followers wrote down his teachings and compiled them into different books. One of these books is the Analects. The Analects contains most of the teachings of Confucius, including many of his sayings.

### **Religion and Importance in China**

Although Confucianism is considered a philosophy in many cultures, the Chinese follow it as a religion. Confucianism does contain views about the afterlife and other spiritual matters such as ideas about the soul and may have contained ideas about a god, but may have been lost during time and interpretation. It is widely accepted in China because it supports most of pre-existing Chinese culture, such as the importance of family and respect for elders and authority.

## **Teachings**

One of the main goals of Confucianism is to bring complete order and harmony to society. From Confucius' teachings, historians have derived and summarized five different relationships: ruler and ruled, father and son, older and younger siblings, husband and wife, and friend and friend. For example, a son must deeply respect his father and a father must set good examples and make good choices for their children. Confucianism also set human life above everything else, such as property, in matters of importance.

## **Ethics**

Confucianism ethics are largely based on rather simple morals. These morals include complete honesty, respect for others, and selflessness. Confucius also authored the original (or at least early) version of what is thought to be what Christians call “The Golden Rule”, often called the Silver Rule when referring to the Confucianism version. The “Silver Rule” is underlined in the following passage:

*Adept Kung asked: "Is there any one word that could guide a person throughout life?"*

*[Confucius] replied: "How about [reciprocity]: never impose on others what you would not choose for yourself?"*

In summary, Confucian ethics are largely based on the Silver Rule.

## **Death**

Confucius died in 479 BC. After his death, Confucius' “disciples” both continued his teachings and compiled them into different texts. Confucius thought of his life as a failure. However, his teachings became widely popular during the Han Dynasty (206 BC–220 AD). Under Emperor Wudi, Confucianism was made the official philosophy. Much of Confucianism has been absorbed into Buddhism.

## **Conclusion**

Confucius was a teacher, a philosopher, a poet, a politician, and an author. His teachings have served as the basis for many Asian cultures as well as parts of many Western morals. Used as either a religion, a morality system, or a philosophy, Confucianism constitutes basic human rights and thoughts.